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## California driver cell phone use up in 2018, but down from 2016

More California drivers are using their cell phone behind the wheel, but less than previous years, a 2018 observational study by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and California State University, Fresno found.

The study, which was done between August and September of 2018, revealed fewer than five percent (4.52 percent) of California drivers were seen picking up and using their cellphones, compared to less than four percent (3.58 percent) in 2017. As part of the study, surveyors examined driver behavior at 204 locations across 17 counties statewide.

The 2018 numbers are three percentage points less than 2016 (7.6 percent), a year before the most recent cell phone law went into effect.

"Our goal is to end distracted driving, and there's still work to be done," OTS Director Rhonda Craft said. "This observational survey gives us an idea on where we stand getting drivers' attention away from their phones and where we still have work to do."

Other key findings from the study include:

- Cell phone use was more than 8 times higher (5.55 percent) among drivers with no passengers versus with at least one passenger (less than one percent).
- Cell phone use was higher on local roads than on freeways or highways.
- The most common cell phone use by drivers was to perform a function on the phone. This could be anything from texting, email, GPS, using an app or social media.
- Less than two percent of drivers were observed using their phone with a child passenger.

Under the 2017 hands-free cell phone law, drivers are not allowed to hold their phone for any reason. The phones must be mounted on the dashboard, windshield or center console. The mounted phone can only be touched once with the swipe or tap of a finger to activate or deactivate a function. If cited, drivers face a \$162 fine for a first offense and at least \$285 for a second offense.

Since the first cell phone laws went into effect more than 10 years ago, the OTS has been urging people to put down their phones and focus on the road.

"Social norms are changing when it comes to distracted driving," Craft said. "When a driver's perception of risk changes for certain behaviors like using their phone and driving, they are less likely to do something that can get them in trouble or worse, in a crash."